

ADDRESS

DELIVERED THE TWENTY-EIGHTH JUNE, 1853,

BEFORE THE

American Whig and Eclectic Societies

OF THE

COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY.

BY

BENJAMIN H. BREWSTER, ESQ.

PHILADELPHIA.

1854.

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WHIG HALL, June 29th, 1853.

Resolved—That the thanks of this Society be tendered to BENJAMIN H. BREWSTER, Esq., for his able and eloquent address, delivered yesterday, and that a committee be appointed to ask a copy for publication.

ASHBEL GREEN,
HENRY C. ALEXANDER, } *Committee.*
SAMUEL S. FORCE,

CLIO HALL, June 29th, 1853.

Resolved—That the thanks of this Society be returned to BENJAMIN H. BREWSTER, Esq., for his able and eloquent address, delivered yesterday, and that a committee be appointed to request from him a copy for publication.

C. C. JONES, Jr.,
WILLIAM F. PAINE, } *Committee.*
ROBERT R. ANDERSON.

THIRD STREET, Philadelphia.

Gentlemen of The American Whig and Clisophic Societies—

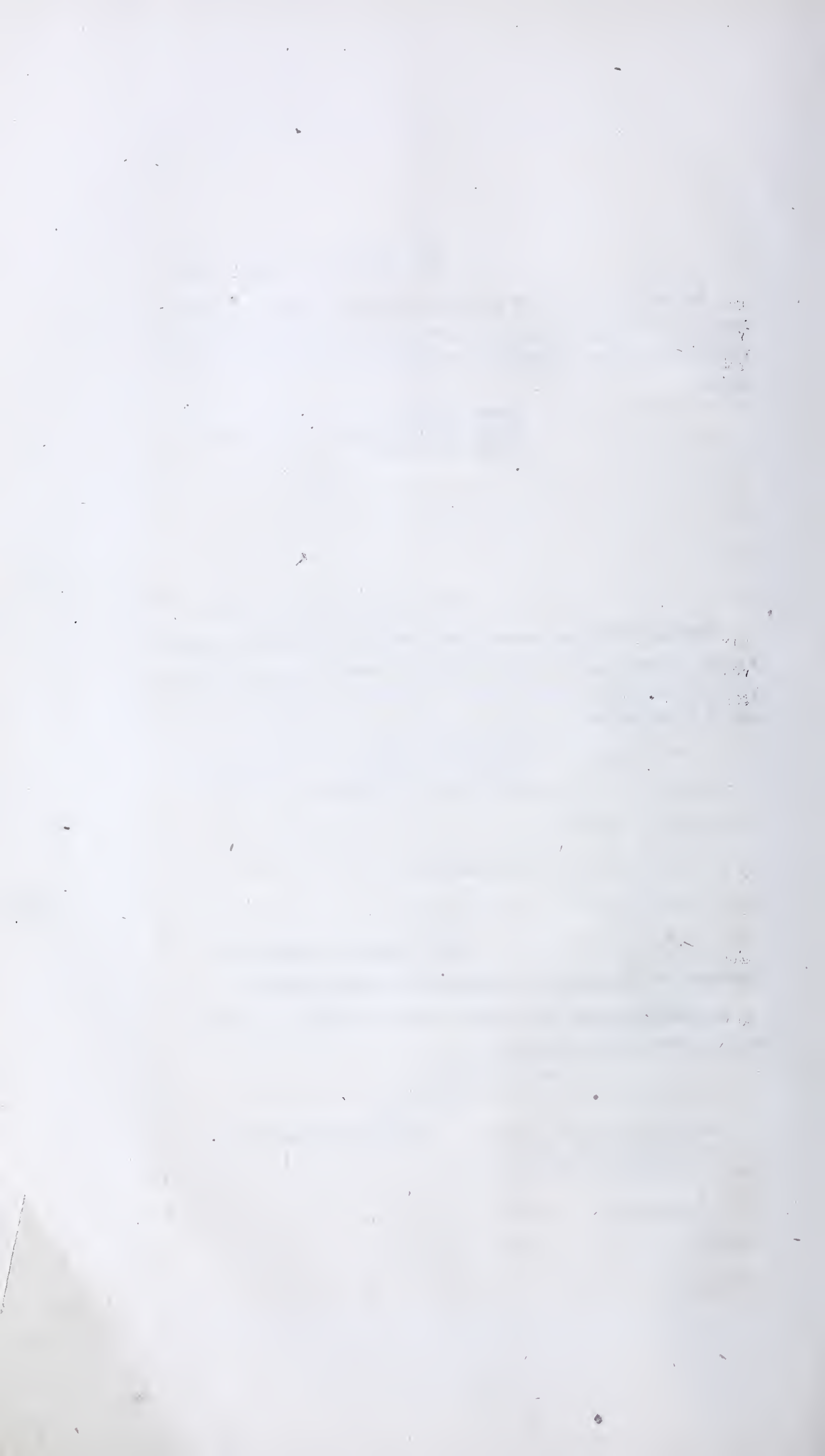
In compliance with your request, I herewith send you my address, to which you are quite welcome.

I am, Respectfully,

Yours, &c.,

BENJAMIN H. BREWSTER.

Saturday, Sept. 10th, 1863.



A D D R E S S .

GENTLEMEN :

My first duty will be to thank you for your partial remembrance in selecting me to address you. When the notice of my appointment reached me, it excited grateful and pleasant feelings. I was delighted that you thought me not unworthy of your regard, and was touched with a strong sense of gentle memories connected with my studentship and association in your venerable and illustrious Fellowship.

According to a wise usage, established between the Great Halls of this ancient seat of learning, you have always selected from your graduates in alternate years, some one who has carried with him through life, a trace of his early culture, and given evidence of his merit to the world, by his love of letters, or his pursuit of science, and his devotion to that truth, whose bright countenance so illuminates the air of quiet and delightful studies. The recollection of this roused within me a sense of reluctance to undertake the execution of that command which you had put upon me, and which I knew it was my duty to obey. It is a bright honor, even though it is a sharp trial.

Hitherto, you have chosen from your long roll of eminent graduates, men of acknowledged public renown. Their accomplished efforts rose up before me. Berrien and Forsyth, Southard and Frelinghuysen, Dallas and Biddle, John Sergeant, and Gaston, and McDowell, have all stood where I now stand, and, with dignity and eloquence, and exalted thoughts, brought back to this the nursery of their enlightened minds, the tribute of their homage and their praise.

Here stood Biddle, in the very zenith of his fame and power, and with his glittering rhetoric allured you to the study of letters as the true consolation in adversity, and the only embellishment of a prosperous and happy life, while with his heroic invective he denounced the slave of party and parasite of power. Here, too, stood the younger Dallas, and charmed you with his graceful elocution and dignified reflections upon love of country. Southard from this desk unsealed those pure streams of wisdom and beauty that adorn with sublime simplicity the inspired Word of God. Macaulay, in his address, when inaugurated as the Lord Rector of Glasgow University, related that upon an academic festival like this, the great Master of English eloquence, Edmund Burke, was dumb. Macaulay makes mention of that incident to palliate his defects, and plead for forbearance as I now do. If those two bright planets could pal before the full blaze of their scholastic Sen-

ates, how must I feel, when unlike them, I am conscious of my feebleness, and stand in painful awe of the high examples that have gone before me.

It has perplexed me not only to select the theme of my address, but the method and manner have also caused me some uneasiness. So frequent are these occasions, and so many excellent discourses have been delivered, upon every topic suitable for the purpose, that you will not wonder at my hesitation. Bear with me. I hope that you will not be disappointed by the simple reflections of my own experience upon manhood's exacting duties since I left these walls. It seems to me that it would be better to talk plainly and unaffectedly to you, as I now feel with you and for you, earnestly, sincerely, truthfully. I was once one of you, and in my heart of hearts, I am still your Fellow and your Brother. It would, indeed, be better thus to reason with you, in a home-bred manner, than to court your favor with the "fair outside of enamelled words and sentences, which do sometimes bedazzle the eye with their glittering show, and which is but hunting after affected words and following the strong scent of great swelling phrases." "Come, let us reason together."

A few short years ago where you are I was, and where I am some of you will hereafter stand, as I now do, and see rise up around you a host of recollections that you had long forgotten.

“And hopes and fears that kindle hope,
 An undistinguishable throng,
 And gentle wishes long subdued,
 Subdued and cherished long.”

But for those who were with you here you will search in vain. Indeed, it is a sad and doleful thing, thus to pause in the mid-current of life's impetuous stream, and look back for those, who, with exulting shouts of light hearted boyhood, plunged with you into the angry flood. Where are they? We may call plaintively, and piteously, and eloquently, as once did a great old lawyer, mourning for an extinguished and illustrious race of nobles: “Where is Bohun? Where is Mowbray? Where is Mortimer? Nay, which is more and most of all, where is Plantagenet? They are entombed in the urns and sepulchres of mortality.”

Believe me, when I say to you, that the life you have before you is one of duty. Let no man start out from this place, decorated with the high commission of his degree, exulting in the false belief that life is a play-game merely. Morally, mentally, socially, physically, this life is a trial. The world that lies before you is a hard one. If you mean to be men and live up to your manhood, fight with it, and fight for it you must, and the sooner you learn the sense and saving power of those two words—duty and obedience—the better it will be for you. It is well for us all that we have thus, from the outset, to grapple with difficulties and to do battle with a thousand griefs that

throng every step of our being. If you fail in your ends, you will find that your faithfulness has been rewarded by some unexpected compensation, or by relief from some sad calamity that would have overwhelmed you had you gone on in the way of your own choosing. If you triumph and prosper, if wealth and reputation exalt you before men, remember, that as your station is conspicuous and your means abundant, so will your duties increase and your obligations press down upon you. I say again to you, and earnestly entreat you to take counsel by one who has come here covered with the dust of the world's wayside, and sometimes weary with his journey, that the surest road to pain, and shame, and sorrow, is the path of frivolity and pleasure.

Before you start out, sit down like true men—like penitential men—and take an account of your mental and moral property. Some of you will find that you have well spent the time you passed ; others of you will hang your heads with repentant pangs for time abused and advantages neglected. For the past there may be extenuation. Want of proper preparation before you were sent here may have balked you in the very outset. Wealth and indolence, encouraged by social habits, may have checked others ; and some may have gone through their college life, heart-sick with griefs known only to themselves. If you have a good store laid by do not like the hare in the fable, lie down and sleep

and let the tortoise quietly pass by you. If you are poor in knowledge do not pine over the past, but forthwith rouse yourself and set about repairing your neglect. Your training, has, at least, taught you where and how you can get the bright armor with which you are to march out and face a world in strife. Go after it forthwith ; be not daunted by the past or the painful consciousness of your own feebleness and poverty. Take courage from the history of many men who, like you, have loitered through college, and like you have felt the necessity of exertion when standing on the very edge of manhood. Remember these words spoken by one who was arrested in his early career of voluptuous indolence and indulgence, and with energy and zeal repaired neglected opportunities and came to great fame. " Every man who rises above the common level has received two educations—the first from his teachers, the second, more permanent and important, from himself." Lose no time, for by and by you will see and hear of some companion who left here with you, who has been exalted for merit and earned the just applause of thoughtful men. You will hear of some others exposed and disgraced, and swept away beneath the dark waters of that stygian wave which flows fast by the land of indolence and pleasure, and leads to crime and ruin, and then out of the gloom that surrounds you will come up the cry,

“Watchman, what of the night?”

and to this your own soul must answer.

Do not understand that I would stimulate you to exertion for the mere purpose of display. The discipline and labor that each one should take upon himself, in the cultivation of his mind and the attainment of knowledge, will soon yield a rich reward in conscious dignity of character, and manly self-control in all the varied and entangling relations of life. As a people, we are fond of public exhibitions, and hanker for popular applause. The sum of life is not made up of shows. If it was, they would soon cease to charm, and the gilded bauble would crumble into ashes and leave the painted mummer a prey to wretchedness and grief. But with quiet labor and discipline you will lay by a store of learning and wisdom that will give steadiness and strength to each step you take, while with the grace and polish of refined and exalted thoughts, you will impart happiness and innocent pleasure to all around you. Let your aim be to merit the commendation of prudent men, not to attract the gaze of vain and empty people. The object of education is not the possession of knowledge or a taste for the magic beauties of mere letters. De Quincy, whose whole life has been one of superhuman devotion to intellectual pursuits, and whose energy of character has triumphed over an absorbing and destructive appetite, tells us in plain terms that literature itself

will not answer all the desires and ends of the intellect ; that the human mind calls for something more, with which it *must* be satisfied, or men will waste themselves upon some vulgar excitement of business or pleasure. Selfish, sensuous indulgence of the mind, will be visited with stern punishment. Nature resents all excesses. There must be a moral object and end in all you do—a sense of duty and obedience to a nobler purpose than your own enjoyment or your own advancement. “ Come, I say, let us behold the beauty of our minds, and having beheld it, let us study to adorn it ; and having adorned it, let us glory in the ornaments ; and knowing the shortness of this our mortal life, let us secure an immortality, by building ourselves a name which time itself cannot efface. We are all sprung from celestial seed, thither let us return whence we derive our origin. Thus, as we behold the rays of the sun, descending upon a certain space in the horizon, so shall the rays of the Divine mind shine upon us ; but, unlike the natural orb which withdraws its beams, and for a time leaves the space in darkness, the sun of knowledge shall enlighten us through the whole of our career with increasing splendor, and shall render us glorious objects to all beholders. Let us imitate the example of the Lion, who being the most noble of beasts, is naturally averse to society, and prefers the gloomy solitude of the forest to the company of inferior animals. Let us purge our minds from

fancy and vanities, and let nothing delight us but what is truly great ; and thus, whatever may be the height of our ambition, we shall find that difficulties will vanish at our touch, and that there is nothing so arduous that we shall not be able to conquer it."

In your long roll of pious scholars and patriot statesmen, you have given to your country and the world, two such men as Jonathan Edwards and James Madison. Two high examples of pure minds dedicated to the wise use of their intellectual faculties in the strict performance of their allotted duties in life. Two minds, whose labors have illustrated with distinguished wisdom those lofty departments in the circle of human knowledge, for which this country is alone pre-eminent—Metaphysical Theology and Constitutional Liberty. Together, their writings have imbued our people with a faith in God and a faith in man, and proclaimed to the world that this nation is a majestic temple dedicated to God and Liberty. Cultivate the example of these men—your illustrious predecessors. Remember, that it is your proud privilege to call them your Fellows and your Brothers. Go forth from this great Seminary of piety and patriotism, of wisdom and of learning, resolved like them to be equal to the duties you owe to your fellow men, and like them you may earn a reward that time will brighten, and secure the just commendation of your conscience. There is a lustre

in such fame, that will outshine the glare of a thousand blazing rockets. There is a dignity and gravity in such lofty pursuits, and such steady devotion to usefulness and truth, as will extinguish the glitter of all the ostentatious verse and enchanting fiction that was ever written. Genius—that which men call genius—the dazzling results of irregular and bewildered intellects—the sensuous thoughts of voluptuous men—can intoxicate and degrade—it can enchant and enervate, but it cannot purify and exalt—it cannot give content to life or confidence to death. Human nature is prone to ennoble those who are inspired with the dangerous gift of genius ;—few men who are endowed with it are fit to use it. It would almost seem as if they were blemished with defects and stained with vices, lest mankind should worship them. The Spirit of Sin has that which men call genius ; but it is an angel or a good man only that can be wise and pure, and full of all those tender affections that exalt life and fit us for hereafter.

Serious men, urged by serious convictions, first established this nation. With colonial charters conferring qualified sovereignty, granted by princes, who little recked what they were doing, they turned their backs upon the old world, its vanities and its shackles, to establish a free land. That which ecclesiastical mercy had done for those who fled from power, in the barbarous night of feudal supremacy, it was their allotted duty and destiny to

do for the victims of intolerance and bigotry. They were to build a sanctuary for the mind as well as body. Indeed, they were serious men, and had to do a solemn thing. They have performed their task well ; let us not wantonly forfeit the fruit of their great exertions.

We, too, have serious duties cast upon us. Let us not waste our time in vicious trifles. From the first we have had no need to create mere ornamental letters. The whole treasury of ancient and modern classics lies before us finished and complete, but around us and about us are physical and political necessities, urging us to action and to thought, far above the pursuit of mere polished letters. For the physical results, let the marvellous prosperity of this country speak—for the political—it was the high destiny of this people to establish a republic in which the popular will selected its representatives and gave ready obedience to its own equal laws. In aiming at this, we have given to the world such abstract dissertations upon government, and the principles of sovereignty, as mankind never before knew. We have excelled them all in works upon political philosophy. Greece herself, with all her wealth, has not in her recorded treasury of speculative knowledge such papers as are contained in the *Federalist*—such daring and self-demonstrating propositions in favor of human freedom as are to be read in the Declaration of Independence. The

Debates of our Constitutional Conventions—the Constitutions of our States and our Union—the legal arguments and judicial opinions, where those high questions of public liberty and private rights have been from time to time mooted, determined and established, contain a body of new learning and new thought that will vindicate our claim in this, at least, to national pre-eminence. By the side of these bold and practical works, all others like them seem tame, and are but rhetorical fancies. From Aristotle's politics, to Montisquieu's Spirit of Laws, from Machiavelli's Prince, and Hobbes' Leviathan, to Locke, and to Rousseau's Social contract, all of them are but dogmatical or romantic speculations, upon the serious problem of social rights and political duties, which it was reserved for us earnestly to discuss, logically to demonstrate, and with practical wisdom and skill to apply and carry into successful execution. Thus have we combined our mental triumphs with our political reformation, and in this at least our fame must be perpetual, let the result be what it may. For the same annals that recite our rise and progress, must side by side with them, contain the history of these, the greatest achievements of learning, wisdom and enlightened letters, recorded in those rescripts and institutes of our political Fathers. The seeds of this sturdy wisdom and spotless learning they brought with them from England, embalmed in the masculine and valiant

Common Law of Coke, and the scholastic and majestic eloquence of Milton. We have elaborated and illustrated their elements in theory and practice. It would seem as if Milton had written of us, and with prophetic inspiration predicted those glories to which, among nations, we in our very youth have come. "Methinks I see in my own mind a noble and puissant nation rousing herself, like a strong man after sleep, and shaking his invincible locks. Methinks I see her as an eagle, mewing her mighty youth and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full mid-day beam, purging and unsealing her long abused sight, at the fountain itself of heavenly radiance."

Remember, however, that while you should be incited by such examples, to be worthy of your country and its fame, that you go far astray from the true path if you are allured from your social and personal duties into the angry contentions of place hunters and politicians. The time was, in the early history of this country, when great men were wanted in public places to establish our institutions—good men are needed now in the walks of quiet life to strengthen them. All the world over the trade of a politician is the occupation of a gamester; it is the business of a man whose time is spent in envy and strife. Public stations can confer no rank and bring no distinction to men who run after them. All great public occasions command the men best fitted for the necessities of

the time. The emergencies that excite great men to action having passed by, tranquility having been restored, order having been established, new men—inferior men—men of doubtful parts succeed to their masters, and manage with ease if not with skill, the vast machine which wisdom created and industry set in motion. All history has afforded constant example of this. Our History may yet do so. Sir Robert Walpole in these latter times, with a masterly resolution—"with a power mightier than the storm, the power that binds the storm—the calm,"—plucked up the crown of England from the hedge wherein contending factions had flung it—established the Hanoverian succession, suppressed conspiracy, quieted religious discord, and secured that stability and dignity to public affairs, and that repose to private life which nurtured the strength of England and gave her the power to resist a world in arms. With inflexible purpose he repelled all attempts to embroil his country in a war, and for twenty long years, as the first minister of the crown, governed with heroic will. He was succeeded by inferior men, but when the exigencies of public life again required a man, the Peihams gave way for a Pitt, as politicians and placemen in this country must hereafter give way for patriots and statesmen.

The highest public distinctions in this country can have no attraction for right minded men unless they are the unsought reward of personal worth,

dignity of character, mental ability, and a blameless life—obtained in any other way they disgrace those who hold them. They were intended to be great honors, not rich sinecures. The compensations attached to the best of them will not equal the income that any man can earn who is fit to have them and discharge their duties. If men crawl to high places by craft and low contrivance—if they hold them at the cost of all love of truth and practice of heroic virtue—if they accept stations which they are unequal to, from want of proper training, from want of information and want of mental capacity, and which they fill like impostors and usurpers, puffed up with vanity, and meanly greedy for the pay of the place—they are in a pillory. Such adventurers and serving men in their masters' clothes will be laughed at and expelled with scorn by the misguided people who exalted them to power, to establish an equality of vulgarity, ostentation, and wickedness. Let not this be your fate. Thus far the great men of this land have with reluctance and humility received the dignities their countrymen have bestowed upon them. Washington and Jefferson and Jackson never stooped to solicit place, or accept it as the result of secret contrivance. Let me warn you against the temptations that will beset you to embark in this business of politics. A life well spent in the steady pursuit of almost any calling will yield you a better income, will give you an independence of posi-

tion and a manly dignity of character that no office can ever secure for you. The small offices of a country are always small places, and the high ones must be filled by men of mark, for little men grow less in them and dwindle into pigmies. Before you will consent to step out of the respectable privacy of your own calling to take office, be sure that you are not unworthy of the place or impelled by selfish motives, for to the most worthy and upright these stations bring with them trials and griefs that torture men to death. Often times persons of merit are swept to ruin in these high floods or vulgar excitement, or are stained for life and their usefulness hurt by stooping to be associated in those enterprises with mean and unprincipled men. The shores of political life in every country are strewn with wrecks like these, and many of them were rich argosies. If you wish to know what public fame is, remember that the long line of Roman consuls and Grecian magistrates is now forgotten, while Esop, the slave, Socrates, the mechanic, and Horace, the son of a freedman, are immortal.

But, let me now prepare to conclude. Many things have occurred to me as I proceeded with these reflections, which I would have said, but ought not ; neither the time allotted for the purpose nor the occasion itself would permit me to say them. Before we part let me solicit your attention upon one other topic of vast and earnest

interest to you and all of us. I have hesitated whether I should address you, in this my layman's homily, upon that which would better become an ecclesiastic. I feel it to be my duty, and I must speak. Remember, gentlemen, that which I say to you is the result of mature conviction. When you go from these walls into the world, you will turn your back upon serious things, and be involved either in the business or the pleasures of this life. You will jostle with men, and in the excitement of the bustle and contest you will forget that there is a power that directs all things, to whom you must answer for all you do. Your thoughts will become of the earth—earthy. If you meet with disappointment in your pursuits, you will not see in them the hand of providential warning, but you will say that it is your own want of skill or the successful rivalry of others that has foiled you. If you prevail in your efforts, you will readily give the credit to your own energies and abilities. This is the practice and example of all men. They thus, virtually, exalt human efforts above all things, and utterly deny the overseeing power of Providence. It is to my mind but practical infidelity. This is disobedience and rebellion that will sooner or later be visited with punishment.

Le Maistre, the accomplished philosopher and religious champion of Modern Conservatism—the successor if not the disciple of Hobbes of Malmesbury, once wrote to a noble friend who had

suggested some doubts as to the truth of revealed religion, that irreligion was a blackguard, and that no gentleman could entertain such thoughts without waiving his rank and descending to the level of a low bred man. Mark this well. If you mean to stand upon the platform you now occupy—if you mean hereafter to sustain the true dignity of the high honor conferred upon you by the diploma of this great school of learning, you must respect, revere and manfully and openly maintain the religion of your country. I do not presume to touch with unhallowed hands the sacred subject of your duty to your bountiful Creator. Would that I could feel that I was worthy to do so, but I must exhort you with all the sincerity of my heart, to honor if you will not adore—to believe if you do not profess. That which was once religious toleration, I sometimes fear has almost degenerated into the recognition of irreligion. The public and the public men act as if our prosperity was due to themselves and the public institutions alone. The God they invoke in their proclamations might as well be the God of Socrates or Cicero, of the Sultan or the Fajah, or any other infidel or Pagan—or that incarnation of blood and blasphemy, Robespierre's Goddess of Reason. This toleration and idea of religious liberty has gone so far as to virtually repudiate Christianity---as if to secure human freedom it was necessary to acknowledge Lucifer himself. This practical infidelity would ad-

just God's providence as wisely as a man who would settle an account of millions with a copper farthing. Christianity is the common law of this land. Obliterate it and the nation would crumble into fragments and perish in a day. Our fathers brought it with them as their most precious treasure, and from it they took all that is pure and true in the institutions they bequeathed to us.

The fool, called the philosopher, in the pride of human will, points to the triumph of human intellect as evidence against revealed religion—that which is the progressive proof of the power and bounty of our Creator, is used to demonstrate human supremacy. If men were idiots they would not dispute the will of their Creator, but when they are ennobled with intelligence the first use they make of the gift, is to refer to its works as evidence of their independence. Remember that each one of us is but one of eight hundred millions. See the countless throngs of worlds that rush with measureless velocity through infinite space. Look upon the earth whirling on its appointed course with planets for its mates—with the sun to shine by day and the mild beauty of the moon to adorn the night, and see the sky-piercing mountains—the rolling rivers---the majestic ocean---the sparkling, babbling brook---behold Aldabaran and Orion—the Centaur and the Southern Cross, shed down their pure light, and through thousands of years testify to God's love for man. Turn, then, from

gazing on these glories that blaze above you, and look down into the still, starry depth of your own soul, and you will say "Creation confounds Reason." Do you beware of guilty indifference and of all presumptuous pride of reason. The highest works of human skill and human thought outlive through ages the creatures that produced them. Southey thus relates :

When Wilkie was in the Escorial, looking at Titian's famous picture of the Last Supper, an old Jeronomite said to him :---" I have sate daily in sight of that picture for now nearly three score years. During that time my companions have dropped off, one after another, all who were my seniors, all who were my cotemporaries, and many or most of those who were younger than myself ; more than one generation has passed away, and there the figures in the picture have remained unchanged ! I look at these till I sometimes think they are the realities and we but the shadows.'"

May he whose "service is perfect freedom," give you the constant assistance of His Holy Spirit, that you may be effectually restrained from Sin, and excited to your Duty.